to enable the rural poor to increase the opportunities for sustained employment. The secondary objective is generation of wage employment for the unemployed poor in the rural areas.

(4) *Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY):* This Programme has been launched on 25th September, 2001 with the objective of creation of wage employment opportunities in the rural areas and also to provide food security, alongside the creation of durable community, social and economic assets and infra-structure developments in these areas. The Programmes of EAS and JGSY will be merged fully with this Scheme from 1st April, 2002.

Development of rural marketing

1173. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering any proposal for the development of Rural Marketing as well as improvement of rural economy by benefiting small and marginal farmers in the country; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) An Expert Committee constituted by the Ministry of Agriculture to examine the existing marketing system in the country, has made several recommendations for strengthening and developing agricultural marketing in the country. The main recommendations of the Expert Committee are:

(i) Government need to examine existing legal framework governing the institutions of regulated markets and remove all such restrictive provision which inhibit growth of a competitive marketing structure in the country.

(ii) Government need to promote direct marketing of agricultural produce by the farmers to maximize their share in the price.

(iii) More commodities should be added to the list of commodities allowed for forward and futures trading to reduce

price risk and to facilitate integration of domestic market with international markets.

(iv) Government should promote development of national warehousing receipt system for agricultural commodities to induce increased flow of funds to agriculture sector and to increase price risk management.

(v) Credit policy of the Government should support pledge financing by treating it as priority sector lending to agriculture with the facility of concessional re-finance.

(vi) Government need to promote marketing extension, training and research and use of information technology in agricultural sector to advise the farmers on (a) product planning, (b) market information, (c) securing markets, (d) alternative/ direct marketing, (e) improved marketing services including grading and packaging, and advantage of group marketing.

An inter-ministerial Task Force has been constituted to examine the recommendations and suggest measures for implementation of the recommendations of the Expert Committee.

The Hon'ble Finance Minister had, in his budget speech on 28.2.2001, announced to extend the coverage of credit linked subsidy scheme for construction of cold storage for perishable commodities also to cover rural godowns. In pursuance of the above announcement, a scheme for construction of rural godowns is being formulated. The scheme will enable the small farmers to enhance their holding capacity in order to sell their produce at remunerative prices and avoiding distress sales.

Self-Help Group

1174. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) how many Self-Help Groups are functioning in the country;

(b) how many of them are in Karnataka;

(c) the number of rural poor so far benefited from these Self-Help Groups in Karnataka;